Beyond Our Boundary Lines: Advocating for Agriculture

We save land in perpetuity through a legal document called a conservation easement – but that’s only just the beginning. How do we ensure that the farmland we’re protecting stays in farming, since a typical conservation easement does not include an obligation to do so? Or how do we ensure that conserved, pristine habitat isn’t degraded over time by poor water quality, since the safeguards within an easement for water quality protection only extend to the legal boundaries of that parcel? The answers to these questions are complex, and can’t be resolved with a single legal document. That’s why, over the course of the last two years, our Board of Directors has affirmed, and re-affirmed, that we need to be investing in work that ensures that our water remains pure and that our conserved farms are actually being farmed. These new avenues of work are not tangential to our core mission of land preservation, but instead are central to it – they help ensure that each conservation easement will still be protecting precious natural resources well into the future.

This year USVLT received a three-year grant that enables us to invest more resources in our agricultural revitalization work. Jesse Wright was recently selected for a new position to head up this initiative. If her name sounds familiar, it’s because she is our existing Office & Outreach Manager. Jesse is eminently qualified to lead this initiative, as she has worked on the consumer side of our local food system for years (you may know her from May Kelly’s Cottage), and is passionate about local food. She also recently earned a Master’s Degree in Environmental Law and Policy from Vermont Law School. Jesse will now be splitting her time between her “old hat” of outreach and administration and her “new hat” of food system work. We are delighted to have Jesse full-time.

Long-term goals for this initiative include ensuring that more farmers are farming at a profit, and that more consumers are asking for and preferentially seeking out local products. Initial objectives are to enhance existing distribution networks, as well as to grow the market share for our local farmers through a collaborative and targeted marketing campaign. We are already meeting with other movers and shakers in the North Country’s food system network, and will soon be formulating a plan for concrete action, with farmer buy-in. We’ve got a lot of vision – now we need to consolidate wishes into an actionable plan, which is where the good, hard work begins.

What’s Inside

The Upper Saco Valley Land Trust recently completed three remarkable land-protection projects, each an iconic part of their respective locations. Find out more about these properties on pages 4 & 5.

“Eating is an agricultural act.”

Wendell Berry
USVLT President’s Message

Doug Burnell

USVLT closed on three significant easements in 2016, welcomed a diverse group of highly qualified new board members (while saying farewell to several hard-working seasoned veterans), and had the good fortune to receive a three-year grant to undertake agriculture re-vitalization—you’ll find more details on all the aforementioned in the pages of this fall newsletter.

Increasingly, the work USVLT undertakes highlights the fact that the issues we face are not confined to a single protected parcel, or to a single community in our service area, but instead cross town, state, and regional boundaries. Occasionally, this crossover phenomenon mirrors my own personal viewpoints as a working-woodlands owner and conservationist—the decisions I make about the management of my woodlots have repercussions that affect other nearby properties, and similarly, the actions of my abutters ripple across farmland in farming, or how to investigate key questions about how to function. USVLT is similarly reaching borders to consider forest ecology and done, I need to expand my view across boundaries: as we continue to make about the management of my land.

As a surveyor, I’m used to focusing on areas with fixed rectilinear boundaries, but to get good conservation work done, I need to expand my view across borders to consider forest ecology and function. USVLT is similarly reaching across boundaries: as we continue to investigate key questions about how to keep farmland in farming, or how to improve water quality along the Saco, we find ourselves working outside of our easement areas and preserves in stewardship of those natural resources we are charged with protecting. As an added benefit, we trust that our work is bridging human-community boundaries, too.

Recently, I have been volunteering my professional land-surveying expertise (and much good old-fashioned physical exertion) helping USVLT’s current summer intern systematically brushing and flagging obscure boundary lines, then adding blazes and paint and ‘tin square’ signs around some of our preserves. All these garish markings, even though fading all too quickly in the face of lush New England forest growth, can sometimes seem like a contradiction with other open-space values. I can parenthetically attest that feeling old with other open-space values. I can sometimes seem like a contradiction (while saying farewell to several hard-working seasoned veterans), and had the good fortune to receive a three-year grant to undertake agriculture re-vitalization—you’ll find more details on all the aforementioned in the pages of this fall newsletter.

Welcome Our Newest Board Members

Anne Pillon grew up in Jackson, and has 30 years of professional experience in the field of environmental site assessment & compliance. She has investigated contaminated Superfund sites and developed successful pollution prevention and sustainability programs. Most recently, Anne received an EPA lifetime achievement award for “Exceptional Commitment to Excellence” in recognition for her tireless advocacy on behalf of our environment. An avid birder, Anne also volunteers for Ticon Mountain Conservation Center, leading their kestrel nesting box project. She lives in Intervale with her wife, Barlert Police Chief Hadley Champlain.

Linda Zych is a retired elementary school and high school teacher, and a life-long student herself. She holds an undergraduate degree in zoology from the University of New Hampshire, where she also earned her graduate degree in education. Linda also holds law degrees from Franklin Pierce Law Center and Boston University Law School. In addition to teaching, she has worked for a Dover, NH law firm. Active in numerous community organizations, Linda is also the Board President of M&D Playhouse in North Conway. She and her husband Terry live in Intervale.

Rick Jenkinson first visited the White Mountains on a hiking trip at age 12. He recently retired as Senior Director at Thermo Fisher Scientific, where Rick managed government relations and public affairs initiatives globally. Before joining Fisher Scientific in 2003, Rick was Vice President of Public Relations at AT&T Broadband. A 1979 graduate of the University of New Hampshire, he serves on two additional boards, the New Hampshire Institute of Politics and Piscataqua Savings Bank, and is active in the Appalachian Mountain Club. Rick and his wife, Vickie, reside in Kearsarge, and are active hikers and skiers.

Committee Spotlight

Did you know that USVLT has a unique committee charged with self-governance, organizational function, and strategic direction, aptly called “SACo” (short for Strategic Action Committee)? SACo focuses on: board and committee recruitment, strategic-organizational planning, and board and staff education on best practices. Importantly, SACo is charged with looking at our mission within a broad context. Yes—we’re conserving land for community benefit, and our core work is and always will be legal land protection—but how else are we guaranteeing that our work creates lasting impact in our communities? To ensure that the natural resources we are charged with protecting will be here for future generations, we need to look beyond the four corners of an easement document or the monumented boundaries of a piece of land. To this end, SACo continues to do outreach and research in the areas of agricultural and water resources. For more details on this work or to become involved with one of our committees, please call or email the USVLT office.
Our Latest Land Protection Projects

With 58 projects completed over its 15-year history, the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust and its partners have now conserved over 11,000 acres. These properties include our communities’ historic farms, sensitive habitat areas, and working forests. All of the properties protected by the Land Trust are vetted for their conservation values and help to safeguard the lands and waters that sustain our local communities and quality of life.

The permanent protection of these properties serves as a testament to our area’s rich agricultural history, honors our communities’ historic farms, and is an investment in the future. The lands and waters that sustain us, including our communities’ historic farms, sensitize habitat areas, and working forests, serve as a testament to our heritage.

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For the past two years, the Land Trust has been working with the Briggs family to develop a forest management plan for the property. Then, in March of this year, the family contacted the Land Trust about taking full ownership of the property. The Land Trust, as owners “in fee,” will continue to work on signage, trail upkeep, and the reestablishment of historic views across the Valley to the countryside.

The closing on Hayes Farm coincided with the completion of the Lucy Family Farm Project along the Saco River on West Side Road. This multi-year project protects 45 acres of high-quality farmland soils, as well as gorgeous views from West Side Road toward Cathedral Ledge.

Among Conway’s original settlers, the Lucy clan began settling the area in the early 1800s. The Lucy family land in conservation. Now my brothers and sisters and I are following his lead. We’re trying to make sure the land never goes away, just like the Lucys,” said Nat Lucy.

The easement provides connectivity to other large blocks of undeveloped land, including Cathedral Ledge / Echo Lake State Park and the White Mountain National Forest. In addition to the Lucy family, project partners included the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Agricultural Conservation Easement Program, the New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP), the Gibson/Woodbury Charitable Foundation, Kendal C. & Anna Ham Charitable Foundation and the Conway Conservation Commission.
I can feel the sun beating down on my back, and the sweat rolls down my forehead, making it more challenging to distinguish the rock contours below. I have a five-gallon bucket in my right hand as I head for the bank of the Swift River, and begin to meander out toward midstream. It’s important to fill the bucket from the midpoint, to ensure that my sample is the most representative of the river’s water quality. After filling the clean bucket I begin the more difficult venture back to shore, balancing on the smooth slippery rocks in the fast-moving current, and while carrying 40 pounds of water.

Conway, Fryeburg, I am testing for turbidity, pH, dissolved-oxygen concentration, water temperature, and specific conductance. I have been able to coordinate with Daryl Mazzaglia from the Bartlett Conservation Commission, and through their generosity I am able to borrow their testing equipment. Compiling this data over time, and matching it with other data already gathered by the Bartlett Conservation Commission and other groups, will enable us to see trends in water quality along the Saco River. We need many more years of consistent records, matched up with weather patterns and river water levels, to determine cause and effect and target potential problem areas with respect to water quality. It’s great to think that another intern in 2026 will be building on my work – and coming to some good conclusions!

2016 Stewardship Intern Perspective

Steven Caracillo is from Lovell, Maine and studying forestry at the University of New Hampshire. Along with his work on water-quality testing, he is also helping to build new trails and refresh boundary lines on USVLT preserves, monitor far-flung easement properties, and review old property files, ensuring that our records are up-to-date.

The ‘What For’ and the ‘How To’ of Amazon Smile

We all are consumers, and chances are that all of us purchase items online from time to time. Did you know that Upper Saco Valley Land Trust is an Amazon Smile participant? AmazonSmile is a simple way for you to support USVLT. With every eligible purchase you make, Amazon will donate a percentage to the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust.

Simply go to smile.amazon.com and sign up or you can use your existing Amazon.com account and select Upper Saco Valley Land Trust as your charitable organization to receive donations.

As you are filling your cart with gifts this season, know that you are supporting our work!

Planned Giving

As you finalize your will or establish an annuity trust. Call us for more information.

 Ellis River Business Partners:

Cooper Cargill Chant
Frost Mountain Yurts
R & R Woodworkers
Gamwell, Caputo, Kelisch & Co
Grandy Oats
Good Vibes Coffee Roasters
Tamarack Construction
The Echo Group
The Other Store
White Mountain Hotel

Great New Ways to Give in 2016

Now is the best time to get involved with the Land Trust. We have a full slate of land protection projects on our calendars, and every dollar you give today has the ability to help protect our region’s most precious natural resources. Visit www.usvlt.org/support-our-work to see how your support can have impact. We’re highlighting two such ways of supporting our work here:

‘Sustaining Stewards’

Sustaining Stewards are members who register for automatic monthly donations through their bank, credit card, Pay-Pal, or similar account. It’s easy and efficient: once you’ve signed up as a Sustaining Steward, you will only receive an end of the year donor acknowledgment letter (for tax purposes), and there are no renewal reminders.

Sustaining Stewards ensure the daily work of USVLT is supported today in order to conserve land for tomorrow. These monthly donations strengthen the administrative fabric of USVLT and build a solid foundation for our future work. Please consider joining today.

Businesses & Foundation Support

CONTRIBUTE TO PLACE™ and Saco River & Swift River Business Partners:

Ellis River Business Partners:

Cooper Cargill Chant
Frost Mountain Yurts
R & R Woodworkers
Gamwell, Caputo, Kelisch & Co
Grandy Oats
Good Vibes Coffee Roasters
Tamarack Construction
The Echo Group
The Other Store
White Mountain Hotel

Foundation & Municipal Support:

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program - Agricultural Land Easement
Anonymous Foundations (2)
Conway Conservation Commission — LCHIP Match Fund
Fund for Maine Land Conservation of the Maine Community Foundation
Gibson/Woodbury Charitable Foundation
Kendal C. & Anna Ham Charitable Foundation
Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP)
Margaret E. Burnham Charitable Trust

New Hampshire Charitable Foundation: Governor Gallen Fund
Jessie B. Cox Fund for Environment
Lakes Region Environmental Fund
Marshall Family Fund
Natural Resources Fund
Stanton & Elisabeth Davis Fund
Thomas W. Haas Fund
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Norcross Wildlife Foundation
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Please consider joining today.

PLANED GIVING

You can always have a future with the Land Trust. Include Upper Saco Valley Land Trust in your estate planning, when finalizing your will, or establishing an annuities trust. Call us at 603-356-9683 for more information.

VOLUNTEER!

It’s boots on the ground that makes land preservation happen. From monitoring easement properties to trail maintenance, Upper Saco Valley Land Trust has something for you!
Preserving Land for Community Benefit

The Upper Saco Valley Land Trust...

9,558 • acres of forest
11,013 • acres protected
505 • member households
7,316 • feet of lake shoreline protected
15.75 • years that the Upper Saco Valley Land Trust has existed
3,853 • reported hours worked by staff in the first three quarters of 2016
2,204,612 • federal, state & town funding, in dollars, leveraged by our members’ contributions to land campaigns
58 • conservation projects (so far!)
35 • % of operating budget fueled by membership donations alone
69,704 • feet of river frontage protected (over 13.2 miles!)
1,013,148 • metric tons of carbon sequestered in forests
130,000 • operating budget, in dollars
718 • acres of farmland protected
520 • acres of wetland protected

“There are no passengers on the spaceship Earth. We are all crew.”

MARSHALL McLuhan